

The Public's Health and the Law in the 21st Century
5th Annual Partnership Conference

Concurrent Session

Closing the Gap between Science and Law

Tuesday, June 13, 2006
4:00-5:30 pm

Moderator: Daniel M. Fox, PhD, President, Milbank Memorial Fund, New York, NY

Panel: Peter A. Briss, MD, MPH, Chief Science Officer, Coordinating Center for Environmental Health and Injury Prevention, CDC, Atlanta, GA

Bruce N. Calonge, MD, MPH, Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Denver, CO; Chair, U.S. Preventive Services Task Force

Hon. Eileen Cody, BSN, Washington State House of Representatives, West Seattle, WA

Session Purpose:

This session spotlights important steps being taken to translate scientific knowledge about "what works" in protecting the public's health into laws and interventions that actually reduce disease, illness, and unnecessary costs in specific, high-priority population groups.

The approaches this panel will describe are relevant to elected policy makers, health professionals, and health care plans seeking to close the long-standing gap between scientific knowledge about what works, on one hand, and effective application of law to practical public health goals, on the other hand

The panelists' presentations will focus on three complementary facets of "closing the gap".

Dr. Briss—for ten years chief of the CDC scientific staff to the independent Task Force for Community Preventive Services (also known as the "Community Guide" project) that has produced more than 170 evidence-based recommendations for programs and policies to improve population health—will describe promises and pitfalls in using scientific evidence to support policy making and will suggest practical steps policy makers and practitioners can take to translate community guide recommendations into front-line practice.

Dr. Calonge chairs the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an expert, independent body that reviews the scientific evidence for preventive interventions delivered in primary care and other clinical settings and that publishes recommendations for the interventions it finds of greatest, documented effectiveness. The Task Force has published nearly 70 such recommendations. In addition to describing the Task Force's methods and recommendations, Dr. Calonge will report from his own experience as a chief state

health official on factors that facilitate or, alternatively, impede adoption of the Task Force's recommendations.

Washington State Representative Eileen Cody—an active health care professional—is a national leader who has designed successful legislation that requires health plans and health care purchasers to base their coverage policies on evidence-based research and data. Rep. Cody will describe her path-breaking initiatives, her experiences as a sponsor of this legislation, practical issues in implementing it, and its impact.

Learning Objectives:

By the close of this session, conference participants will be able to:

- Describe current approaches to using the best available scientific information -- such as that used by the Task Force on Community Preventive Services and the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force -- to support laws and policies that protect the health of the public;
- Describe key provisions of State of Washington legislation that mandates incorporation of evidence-based health services into health care plans; and
- Explain factors relevant to adoption, enactment, and implementation of science-based prevention interventions and legislation.

Session Convener:

The Milbank Memorial Fund

Resource Materials:

Task Force for Community Preventive Services: <http://www.thecommunityguide.org>

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force: <http://www.ahrq.gov/clinic/uspstfix.htm>

Washington State House Bill 1299 (2003), "Providing for Evidence-Based Health Services Purchasing by State Purchased health Care Programs":
<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/Summary.aspx?bill=1299&year=2003>

Daniel M. Fox, "Evidence of Evidence-Based Health Policy: The Politics of Systematic Reviews in Coverage Decisions," Health Affairs, Vol. 24, No. 1.

Milbank Memorial Fund: <http://www.milbank.org> The Milbank Memorial Fund is an endowed operating foundation that works to improve health by helping decision makers in the public and private sectors acquire and use the best available evidence to inform policy for health care and population health. The Fund has engaged in nonpartisan analysis, study, research, and communication on significant issues in health policy since its inception in 1905.